

# Contributors

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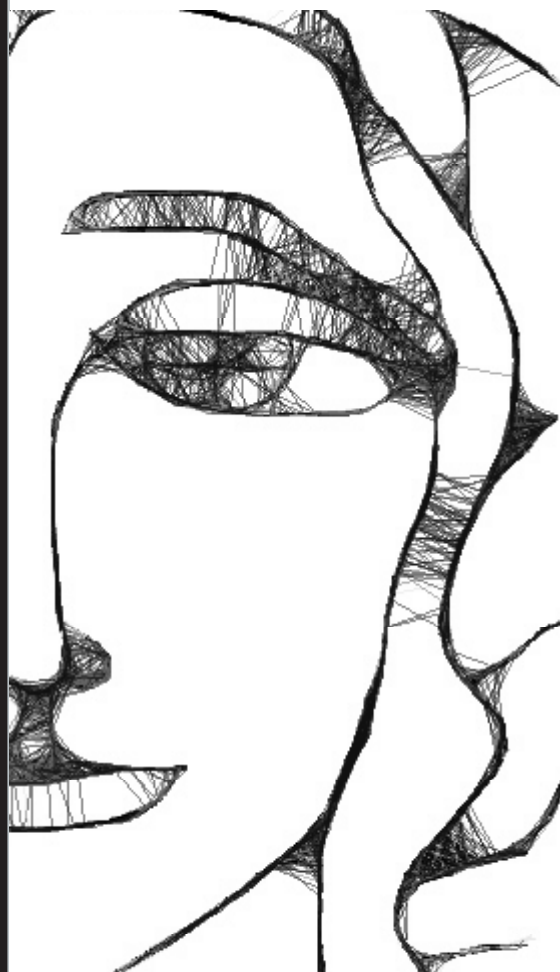
Diego Quiros

Daryl Rogers

Rey Cardenas

Brian Boutwell

Amy King



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## ***from I Once Met: A Picaresque Romp through Poesy*** KENT JOHNSON

I once met Tony Tost. He was well-structured and constructed. There was a painting of boats behind him. A bit paunchy around the middle, he was, but solid.

I once met Todd Sandvik. He was paunchy as well. I really liked him. He had a distillery in his house. But now he doesn't write me anymore. Damn.

I once met Kasey Silem Mohammad. This was at our reading. I liked him. There were grad students from Brown all around. I said, Kasey, would you please pass me the salt? Go fuck yourself, you manufacturer of scandal, he said. (No, not really, I just made that up.)

I once met Dale Smith. We put our heads against the side of Lorine Niedecker's old house on an island in Fort Atkinson and we rested them there for a long time, and I looked at Dale and he looked at me, and we cried for a little while, it was quite something. Then we went to the bar down the road where a small dog walked in circles on its hind quarters.

I once met Ron Silliman. We were in the Soviet Union. On the last day, in the bar of the Baltiskaya Hotel, if that's how you spell it, he said, you know, Kent, something tells me we are going to meet up again. Well, we haven't yet, though I suppose in a way we have. Barrett Watten and Lyn Hejinian inexplicably floated above us, circling the room, like lovers in a Chagall.

I once met Allen Ginsberg. This was at Orono. I had with me an anthology of Buddhist poetry that I'd edited, and since I'd corresponded with Ginsberg in the making of it, I wanted him to sign it. Oh, so *\*you're\** that guy, said Allen. What guy? I said.

I once met Ammiel Alcalay. We sat up all night in Milwaukee smoking cigarettes he rolled. They were skinny and looked like joints. His hair is fabulous, it looks like a lion's mane, and that's just what he was like, a lion talking, there, in a great cloud of smoke, and I could understand him!

I once met Diane Wakoski. We went out to dinner at a pizza place. She talked and talked about Tom Cruise. She went on about him for over an hour. I am not kidding!

I once met Eliot Weinberger. We walked around Iowa City, talking. I liked him, he was well structured and constructed. I think we talked about China and Pound and also about James Laughlin and Samuel Beckett and things like that. A woman approached... Quick, get the fuck behind the car, said Eliot. We did and hid there, crouching. It was Jorie Graham, followed by a train of forty students.

I once met Jonathan Mayhew. It was in St. Louis. I won't here allow my opinions free rein, nor reveal private details. For he generously came to hear me read. And why should I not repay that with a momentary kindness? Yes, Titus Andronicus is a violent mess. But As You Like It is a violence of grace and gentleness.

I once met Chris Daniels. When he smiled so broadly as I read, I knew we would be forever friends. Later, at Gino and Carlo's, we tried to talk about Poetry, but they were playing The Beatles on the juke box at full volume.

I once met Andrew Felsinger. I met him at the Vesuvio. We had a warm, sincere day together. And I felt close to him, like to a younger brother. But we have grown apart, and I am not sure why.

I once met Ernesto Cardenal. We sat, smoking, with a tape recorder and a bottle of rum between us for six or seven hours. He talked quietly about Pound, Jeffers, Amy Lowell, Neruda and Vallejo, about the debate then raging around the Talleres de Poesia movement, about how Exteriorismo had been inspired by Pound's Imagism and Vorticism. Artillery rounds went off all day in the distance, and helicopters flew over every now and then, carrying Sandinista fighters to the front. Yes, that afternoon was certainly one of the highlights of my life.

I've never met Billy Collins, but once I had a dream about him. We were sitting side by side, in a kind of capsule attached to a long metal arm. And the capsule began to spin faster and faster, until my face deformed with the pressure, and I screamed for them to let me out of the capsule. I looked over at Billy Collins, whose face had now become the lovely face of Ingrid Bergman in the movie Casablanca, and he/she just gazed at me, serene, through a soft filtered hue. And I screamed and screamed until my skull, of a sudden, collapsed like an egg shell, into a brownish dust. So now you see: You've been dead for three billion years, said Billy in her husky voice. And then I woke up.

I once met John Beer. He had a t-shirt with the John Deere design that said "John Beer." I laughed and he laughed, too. What a delightful fellow. Mark Yakich was funny that night, but I think I got the most response. Then again, shortly after I'd finished, I noticed that my fly was undone.

I once met Gary Sullivan. He doesn't know this because it was a Halloween party at Alan Sondheim's, and I was dressed up like a sexy hooker. What's up, sugar, he said. Hi there, you ten-inch lollipop, I said.

I've never met John Ashbery, but I feel like I have. Automobiles go by in the night. And somewhere, huge wooden machines stand at attention in a gentle, foggy field, on the hidden side of a mountain, in a cheap velvet painting, it all akimbo and askew, yet somehow still hanging there on half a wall, in some bombed out slum, on the outskirts of Beirut.

I once met Mairead Byrne. She was very nice and I liked her very much. People were coming into the room, and what looked like a sure dud of a turnout became at the last minute an attendance success! So, are you ready for the lion's pit, she said, turning on the microphone. Oh, Mairead, I said, feeling a great urge to pee in my pants, You're such a stitch!

I once met Jackson Mac Low. This was on that panel about Buddhism. I remember that he didn't say very much, nor did he move very much, really. But at the end of the evening he shook my hand and said, "Nice to have met you."

I've never met Ron Padgett, but I almost did. I raised my fist before his door and paused. There were cicadas screaming to death in the rich summer trees. Why ruin it, I said, and walked away.

I once met Lucien Stryk. It was summer, and we sipped tea and read Zen death poems under the stars to each other, on his porch in DeKalb. And then somewhere, there was a sound, like a cup or a vase shattering in the night. And there was a silence for quite a long time... And then a car alarm went off...And a man, across the street, began to shout and swear...And an ambulance siren started up far away...And a deer, with impossibly huge antlers, ran across the yard and vanished into the trees.

I once met Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, a great Russian poet. This was in Leningrad. It was the last year of Glasnost, and there was a conference of new poetry there. One thing I will never forget from that simulacral city in reverse is sitting in a vast hall in a vast, ornate czarist building made all of marble, crimson-draped windows towering to the ceiling, looking out onto the Neva, swarms of cherubs fat and hot for Aphrodite above, Barrett facing me across the great mahogany table in a kind of late pinkish glow, dapper Aeneas in a polo shirt, looking somewhat edgy, eating little spoonfuls of caviar, as satyr attendants from the Ministry of Culture rose and offered formal toasts to the "American Poetic Friends of the Soviet Union." Arkadii Dragomoshchenko leaned over to me and with booze on his breath said in heaviest accent, Is this a great quantity of such repulsive fucking dog shit or what? You think so? I said, my mouth full of bread and sturgeon eggs. Why, it's the first time in my life that I feel like a real Poet. I think this is fantastic! And to my left, far away, at the far head of the regal table, was Ron Silliman, his whole face consumed by a blinding sphere of light.

I once met C.D. Wright. We were in Disney World. We'd gone there on vacation with her and Forrest Gander and their son, "we" being my wife and two boys. The three kids were nine, eleven, and thirteen, and they were each a loaded automatic pistol looking for trouble. It was horribly hot and this was the third day. We sat down for coolness in the shade of a plastic tree near the Giant Spinning Cups of Tea, or whatever they are called. Oh, please someone just goddamn shoot me, said C.D... I have a photo of her right after she said this, and she doesn't appear to be kidding. Minnie Mouse and Goofy are standing behind her, waving.

I once met Stephen Rodefer. This was in England. It was Spring, and I was talking pleasantly to Kevin Nolan, Astrid Lampe, and David Bromige. Stephen Rodefer came over and said something like, So Kevin and David, is Eager Kent trying to suck up to you so he can make it in the avant-garde biz? He walked away, smirking, drink in hand, and I followed him down to the wine box. I grabbed his collar, pinned him against the wall, and said I would break his impertinent nose and worse if he ever messed with me that way again. I mean, I was really angry! OK, OK, he said, I won't, take it easy man, take it easy... Later that day, he read a long diatribe against Language poetry and the post-avant. Midway through his reading, a nine or ten year old boy, a beautiful boy, truly, son of an Spanish poet there, it turned out, walked into the room. And I am not making this up: The boy sat down in a chair against the wall of the side aisle, about twenty feet from the stage, looked at Rodefer and smiled at him in the fullest, the purest sense one could ever give to a smile. I at first thought this must be Rodefer's son, for I saw that he stopped and beamed a huge smile back at the boy, and when he went back to read after a few seconds of just smiling at him, while the boy smiled back in turn, when he went back to read, that is, his poem about the complicities and hypocrisies and treacheries of the post-avant, he choked up and began to weep. He wept as he read, catching his breath in great gulps, sobbing his way through the savage invective of his piece (an invective now swathed in the soft raiment of a most powerful sorrow). And I noticed that the boy, poor thing, was totally confused and upset by this, he didn't understand (and neither did anyone!) and so he ran, embarrassed, out of the room. After a spell, Rodefer took a deep breath, straightened his back, wiped his eyes, and continued, energetically, as if nothing had happened. It was later that night I learned that his own son, aged ten, had drowned, in Paris, three years back. And the person who told me this said that Rodefer's son looked uncannily like this beautiful boy from Spain. And so I cried that night, back at my modernized room at Christ's College, a room, it was, down the hall from Christopher Marlowe's old purported room, and I cried for a long time. And the next day I went over to Stephen, by the wine box, and put my hand on his shoulder, and said, That was one fine, powerful reading you gave yesterday. And he turned and said Thanks, that's very kind of you to say. And we made awkward small talk for a while, and we walked out into the courtyard together, where it was cool in the evening air.

*CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE*

from I Once Met: A Picaresque Romp through Poesy

I once met Henry Gould. I went to the Hay Library at Brown, where he works, unannounced. He came out and seemed surprised that I was there, and of course, that would be natural, since he had no idea I was coming. He was gracious and kind and he invited me out for cups of coffee. I really liked him. He was a gentleman. I had wanted to see him partly because he had recently written a parable on the Poetics list, a strange and fascinating parable involving a bull, and this had put me in mind of an old Uruguayan saying, which begins, *Ojo al toro con tres cuernos* [Beware the bull with three horns]. Well, I wish I could remember the rest, but I can't. But it had made me think back once to when I was 19, at a barbecue in Punta del Este, in the days before it was totally trashed by the Brazilian and Argentinean jet set. It was a big party of young YMCA members, about 25 of us, and everyone got a big hunk of fairly rare meat with the hide and fur still attached. I remember watching the 17 year-old girl I loved pick this up in her hands and chew and laugh. A kid, about the same age, picked up a guitar and started to sing a song by Daniel Viglietti, whose music was banned at the time, and everyone joined in, singing. By and by (for the neighbors had called) a black van and car both full of plainclothes cops arrived and started arresting everybody, and the kid with the guitar, who started to complain, got a long, black club across the face. The cop who was dragging away the girl I loved conveniently grabbed her breasts, and I stepped forward and yelled Hey! But then I didn't say anything more, afraid that I might get hit too. She tried to kick and punch back, but to no avail. She screamed at them that they were fascist pigs. The van drove away.... It was me and three or four 12 year-olds who didn't get taken in. I was American, so the cops just took down some info and told me to watch it. OK, I said, I will. I took the bus back to Montevideo. About two weeks later I saw the girl back at the Y. Our eyes met and then she quickly turned away. I started to say something, but only half of it got out. Here and there I saw her a few times, but never spoke to her again. The kid playing the guitar was in for more than two years. No one died. I have no idea why in the world I'm saying this here. I know my poems, if that's what they are, are sometimes very idiosyncratic and certainly not among the most esteemed. I don't fault anyone for that. In fact, I have come somehow to even like those who don't like me! Isn't that strange? But what is wrong with me? Forgive me for this creepily personal memory! Something about not remembering the old saying about the bull with three horns draws me to recall it, and also to remember the way that beautiful girl turned her eyes from me. It occurs to me now that if it weren't for what happened then that I wouldn't be typing this now, whatever it might mean. It occurs to me that it turned me into everything that I became. I guess that sounds trite. And yes, ok, so I'm feeling a bit embarrassed, not very polished or admirable at all, aware that even this candor is another sad way of demeaning myself before all of you. O, I really did feel like jumping over the cliff. Still do, actually. I wish poetry was a parachute that worked, but it doesn't, not when the cliff is real. And I guess in the end, after all this time, after all those years of trying to forget, that's all that I have to say about that half-remembered saying.

## GETTING TO SWANSEA

## MAIREAD BYRNE

All day I've been trying to figure out how to get to Swansea, or Cardiff. Or Bristol or Fishguard or Pembroke. Or Birmingham. Or Gatwick or Heathrow or Luton or Oxford. Or Dublin or Shannon or Rosslare or Cork. Depending on buses or trains or ferries or planes or maybe a rental—the M4 & driving on the left side of the road. Or time or connections or childcare or Spring Break or schedules timetables or fares. The grand pincer movement of Shannon or Dublin (then Limerick & Cork to Swansea or Dublin to Rosslare to Fishguard then Swansea) by Aer Lingus Bus Éireann to Cork Ringaskiddy then Swansea Cork Ferries with bag baggage & daughter (twice price with daughter but tight time without) or Aercoach Dublin Bus Iarnród Éireann Stena Sealink to Fishguard no taxis at Fishguard no ticket office—bus stop on main road opposite station. To Swansea? (I was thinking of writing to Harvard to say *what's your plan???*). Or Pembroke—no taxis at Pembroke no ticket office bus station one mile from the boat dock, stop outside station. To Swansea? (or Swansea or Anglesea saying *can you advise????*), or Mumbles or Gower. Or Aer Lingus or Ryanair to Birmingham or Bristol or Cardiff & buses from Digbeth or New Street or Cardiff International or Bristol to Swansea. Or rather British Air or Virgin to Heathrow or Gatwick or Luton & National Express Coach from Heathrow Central or Terminals 1, 2, 3, 4, or Gatwick South Term or North Term to Swansea. Or Heathrow Connect or Express (depending on terminal) to Paddington. Or Gatwick Express to Victoria then tube to Great Western to Swansea. I'm not sure about Luton. And RIPTA of course & Bonanza to Logan or Boston from Providence (or MBTA to South Station, Silver Line to airport) solid in each case & in reverse too so many steps up & steps down & bridges & small aisles & small seats & small bathrooms & lurching & heaving & holding a small hand & staircases & corridors & escalators & elevators & moving walkways & glass doors expectant faces empty spaces & sidewalks & fumes complex articulation of distance relentless connection of synapse all w/ sd luggage & backwards & forwards & you know I haven't thought of England for years—or Scotland or Wales but mostly not England & now—all day long—nothing but London & Bristol or Cardiff & getting to Swansea in March.

# hell truck of packaged dreams

John Korn

standing,  
waiting on Siebert Avenue,  
summer  
the beep beep of a truck  
and it's mean white eyes  
press on me and my thoughts  
and condense two years  
into a single  
image of disappointment:  
(me holding a deflated balloon  
on a string with  
a ridicules frowny face)  
the plump curve of  
the drivers tan arm resting  
out the door window  
with his face a blur  
in the side view.  
he is this messenger,  
and he creeps his beast backward  
slowly.  
I want the back roll up door  
to open and eat me  
like a whale  
then  
drive me to a packing plant  
in Jonah, Vermont, fill me with  
Styrofoam and bubble wrap  
send me off to Queen  
Maggie  
who, with hiked dress  
and deadly precision,  
guts out my contents  
judging its worth  
her head tilted slightly.

lord, her legs  
so curved and smooth.

# The Funny Thing Is He's Right

Daryl Rogers

I'm walking north,  
up Limestone,  
past the Zebra Lounge  
and the corner liquor  
store, with its window  
full of MD 20/20,  
Night Train,  
Thunderbird and  
meat magazines,  
past the check-  
cashing store  
and Western Union.  
I step over winos  
and dodge traffic.  
An old white man,  
on a porch, asks me  
where I'm going.  
I tell him Florida.  
You're heading in  
the wrong direction  
he screams,  
spitting on himself,  
laughing and  
slapping his leg,  
his gut and tits shaking  
like an old whore  
having a fit.  
I keep walking  
to the Greyhound terminal,  
avoiding the freaks  
when I get there,  
trying to look as mean  
as a six-foot, one-  
hundred-fifty-pound,  
twenty-year-old kid can.  
I buy my ticket,  
get on the bus,  
make camp  
and watch Lexington  
pass by  
the tinted windows  
like a bad dream.



## Reservations

he paid his way in, so we must praise him,  
 take his coat, if he has one, and if not, if it  
 truly is one of those hottest days of the  
 year, warn him: the place may be filled with  
 those who ignored how they were raised,  
 who may remain all bundled up, who may  
 sit there and use their words between  
 mouthfuls of this and that, and so, we will  
 be there to reassure him: the curtains are  
 drawn to keep what looks like us here, we  
 will emphasize that the cold and aware also  
 need a few laughs and a hundred longings,  
 that it never hurts to have some place that  
 has something to warm them for desert, a  
 perfect place for an uncertain stranger they  
 may call their own

## And Now A Word From One Of Our Sponsors

Ray Cardenas

Cesar Vallejo was pulling Sylvia Plath  
 out of the oven by her hips,  
 words widespread,

the Eiffel Tower making a land-bridge  
 between France and England.  
 He helped her to the sofa,

she was still in a daze  
 as you can well imagine.  
 Her eyes a distant star, maybe Antares,

her frock (which we are not  
 about to mock) gave her the air  
 of so many housewives up and down the street.

Cesar got her a cup of coffee  
 and they talked late into the night  
 except for interruptions by her children,

who still had a mother  
 and us, who still had a poet,  
 but we, of course, dared not intrude.

We stood against a wall  
 and marveled at their art,  
 our eyes stuck to theirs with Elmer's Glue.

## I Have to Go See a Man About a Dog

Joe, brooks are made of stones  
 and—don't giggle—water.

If you listen close, the water chortles.  
 It says: Go away, Joe. Just go. That nude  
 asleep on the torpedo-shaped boulder

isn't posing for you or the photographer.  
 Sometimes, a picture or a moment needs

no words. Clouds mottle. The day is over-  
 cast. A kitten cries for its mother. Hit  
 by a car, she's not coming back. Alas.

Didn't you once say the world was cruel?  
 The hair of the dog will keep falling out

to spite the vacuum and her aching  
 back. She'll surrender your best friend  
 to the pound where he'll die alone. Give

until it aches. (Charity begins at home,  
 eh? The mice played and played

on your Egyptian sheets and king-sized  
 mattress, didn't we? Wheee! ) Don't take.  
 Any wooden nickels clicking in your pocket

should be buried for the squirrels to eat  
 like nookie on a winter body. Jaunary

is always so frigid, so unforgiving.  
 She forgot about the iron. One's shoelaces  
 are sometimes all that contains the feet, keeps

the soles from running away. You have felt  
 the need to flee on the beach. The waves

are always ready to receive a prodigal body:  
 Come, my child. Don't be afraid. Breathing  
 is for old men and babies. What's eating you

is eating me, my sweet. Life and love are ravenous.  
 I /you (are) slay(ing) me. Still, I refuse to feel

shame. Look, the stars are zozzled tonight.  
 That's no siren; that's your wife. Your shirt's on fire  
 and your house is being consumed by flames.

## riding the 12A bus home

john korn

the man with a white pony tail  
leans on the bar and talks to the  
driver and the black kid is drinking  
a frozen coffee drink  
chatting with a Latina girl  
the man with a mustache is on  
his cell phone,  
the girl with braids  
is falling asleep  
and we're all riding  
in this tin box which is shaking  
jumping, stopping and hissing.  
outside it's dark, and in me  
is anger  
yeah. secret anger on the 12A bus  
in me. angry about things  
I'm not going to talk about it.  
it's my anger,  
I think to myself.

the lady to my right  
an angel of a woman  
young, but with gray hair.  
seemed to be meditating  
she seemed to be taking herself  
somewhere other than the 12A bus  
to some secret place  
her eyelids were like  
mushroom tops  
pale curved and smooth  
shut over eyes  
that rejected this all  
rejected the loud engine of this machine  
the chatter of the passengers  
the florescent lights  
this neighborhood  
I saw no ring on her finger  
all her limbs  
were pulled and tucked tight  
to her body  
she lives alone I think  
it was like she could've exploded  
inside her a concealed and locked up world  
that if let out  
could have ripped the bus in two  
spilling pedestrians onto the street  
with their arms and legs scraping  
across concrete, heads breaking apart  
I want her to explode like a balloon  
filled with too much water  
I want her to burst and baptize  
all of us on the 12A bus.  
I want my anger washed away.  
I want to ride the 12A bus  
through abandoned houses  
I want it to crash through  
buildings downtown  
I want it to be her voice and roar  
into the river and drive  
along the bottom where the  
big fish scurry for little fish  
I want the 12A bus  
to be a submarine  
that flows out into the ocean.  
I want it to plow into the shore  
of tomorrow.

Diego Quiros

## I will not Write about Love

*I will not write about love even if memories and moon  
light up the sky at nightfall.*

*I will not write about love or about  
the language and gestures of fools and poets.*

*The further the years span the brighter your eyes seem.*

*I will not write about love by the fireplace on winter nights  
or by the sunken garden where we once sat,  
drank a glass of wine and walked into woods.*

*I will not write about love or about your face  
resting on my chest and your hair on my lips.*

*I will not write about love, and I renounce kissing and whispers.  
You may find me sitting in a coffeehouse writing on napkins  
but I will not be writing about love.*

*We watch commercials and read fashion magazines,  
we call the prison system an institution  
Such deception.*

*Today the day was marked by thunder  
people ran across the beach to watch a man flutter in the sand  
hit by lightning while sleeping  
he must have crossed god's line.*

*I have crossed it also.*

*I will not write about love.*

*I will be alone like a house gutted by fire,  
alone like thorns.*

*I will not repeat myself  
and I will not write about love.*

OCHO

## Transient once

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And then I hit the middle lesson on mercy, among 61 lessons (that's all the sky has to teach, the voices you claim it bore out of nothing, a Nantucket mist out of nowhere is you). There was knowing and patience, and balance. Of course, balance. Homeostasis, the awkward dance. A yellow Post-It held my place while I met the shower already meeting me (who touched one another first?). *We'll sort it out later, endings and climaxes and lead-ins.* There are agreements none of us have to keep, yet I keep mine, only not for walls strapped to the living echo.

Each second, discarded, has used up so much of the world— I am thrilled to leave myself only to come back down to the drive those 25 minutes or so. I-95 NB. Overpasses. Dusk's lint or what spans / hours / crowding in. A concrete flushed with circadian rhythms. I am a mild voltage you could walk past and not notice, the cilia of planets bending as though swept back by a sudden wave made of salt, mint leaves, and water.

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## Entry X.2

Brian Boutwell

On a high plateau a white school bus sits like the dead end to freedom—a theory of home. Home is miles back on coastal plains.

Sometimes I conjugate death. Panic attacks disorder rationality. I touched my tongue to the edge of the sun and lost a taste for certain things.

A vision in New Mexico: an enormous prayer wheel suspends spinning above Taos mountain. A rattlesnake struck my subconscious on the reservation. Here: cotton fields and pine trees are all I see. Black bodies float down the Altamaha.

As a child 20 years back: I buried myself in the plastic leaves and rabbit's feet below the magnolia tree.



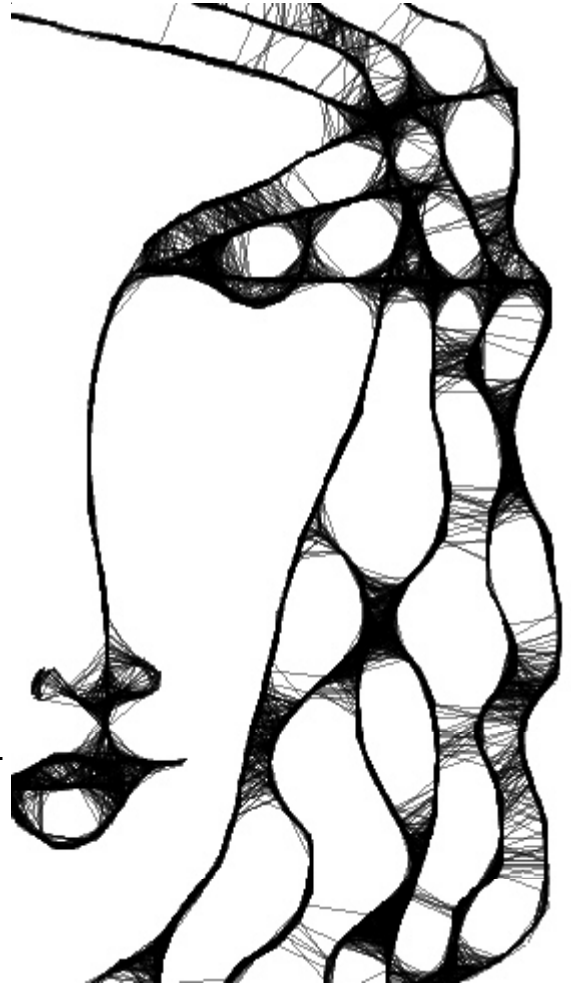
# Tell the World What You Want Them To

Amy King

Boys in backyards who play catch with their dads  
all across the mid-Atlantic states tonight  
know not what they do in the big scheme  
or even bigger picture show. Some won't ever  
carry the chalice of close awareness. But  
just in case, I need to find other nooks to send things  
to and additional soldiers to guard retired secrets.

The truth is we're all detectives finalizing  
a statement on what's true and increasingly bogus.  
That's when I went to get another pen,  
though you hardly knew I was  
nearly missing. Just because commas spread apart  
our rooms doesn't mean they accumulate too.  
But before we go any further, note well: sexual  
proclivities are subject to change.  
Life is an external force burning topless  
images that later leak from the head. And yet,  
it's amazing how children never quite come to resemble  
their grown-up-middle-aged bodies.

These habit-making transitions are therefore and that is .  
What so many don't recall is the disdain  
greeting the erection of something like a little movie  
house on the outskirts of town. It's harder to see  
thriving trees behind the camouflaged flow  
of steely trucks on graveled highway. Ultimately,  
you thought meeting you would disenchant me.  
But the truth is never clueless, hence my calling out  
from the fiery pit of our coconut-colored heaven.  
Just then, mother at the backdoor, rang the dinner bell.



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